

HOMELESS POLICY PRE-ACADEMY SITE VISIT NOTES

On January 13, 2004, our Team convened and went through extensive pre-Academy activities. (Please see Appendix B for the site visit agenda.) These activities were facilitated by Jamie Hart and Margaret Lassiter of Policy Research Associates.

Many areas were covered in detail related to the issues around homeless families and children on a national, state and local level to best prepare our team for the Academy.

HOMELESS POLICY ACADEMY

From January 27-29, 2004, in Miami, Florida, the Tennessee Team convened with 10 other State Teams to participate in an intensive and thorough analysis of the issues facing children and families. (Please see Appendix C for the agenda.)

These discussions led to this draft Action Plan, which the Team respectfully submits to Governor Bredeisen and his staff for consideration. Further detail is attached as Appendix D.

PROPOSED ACTION PLAN FOR TENNESSEE

KEY PRIORITIES

- Establish a formal partnership structure.
- Review and disseminate education and communication regarding best practices and strategies.
- Develop a statewide system to collect, analyze, and disseminate reliable information (quantitative and qualitative) on homelessness, shelters, housing numbers, etc.
- Improve access to mainstream services for homeless children and families.
- Expand inventory of safe, affordable, quality housing.

Priority 1: Establish a Formal Partnership Structure.

Strategy 1: Establish Interagency Task Force to End Homelessness.

- Action 1: Draft/write summary with recommendations for Governor's Office and Commissioners.
- Action 2: Involve high level, career staff in each department, as well as private agencies and consumers.
- Action 3: Formalize role of Task Force through legislative or executive channels, and establish issue-specific sub-committees.
- Action 4: Incorporate federal policy requests for homeless initiatives.

Strategy 2: Establish a Full-Time Coordinator to Lead Task Force.

- Action 1: Identify home department outside government agency for Coordinator position.
- Action 2: Secure position funding.

Strategy 3: Buy-In from Departments.

- Action 1: Present findings from Policy Academy and data group and incorporate feedback into the plan.
- Action 2: Secure commitment from Commissioners to dedicate resources from current programming or new funding opportunities to support evidence-based practices related to homelessness issues.

Strategy 4: Consumer Representation at all Levels of Planning.

- Action 1: Solicit consumer names from key departmental staff, advocacy groups and other stakeholders.
- Action 2: Review for inclusion of cultural, gender, regional, rural/urban, and racial/ethnic diversity.

Priority 2: Review and Disseminate Education and Communication Regarding Best Practices and Strategies.

Strategy 1: Develop Comprehensive Plan with Goals, Methods, Population, and Outcomes.

- Action 1: Identify best practice successes in Tennessee.
- Action 2: Identify national best practice models.
- Action 3: Gather funding information.
- Action 4: Cross-train State and community-based staff.
- Action 5: Provide education regarding correlation between housing quality and health disparities.
- Action 6: Identify housing development strategies that are working in other states/locations.
- Action 7: Identify all State programs that are stakeholders in rendering services to homeless adults, families and children.

Strategy 2: Establish a Specific Communication, Education, and Advocacy Plan for the Public, Consumers, Agencies, Legislators, and Communities.

- Action 1: Implement a concise media education campaign.
- Action 2: Develop a resource guide for families and community-based staff (i.e., shelter workers).
- Action 3: Provide targeted education about homelessness to faith-based communities.
- Action 4: Utilize Departmental public information officers to work on education campaign.

Priority 3: Develop a System for Collecting, Analyzing, and Disseminating Information.

Strategy 1: Reach Consensus on Definition of Homeless Families with Children.

- Action 1: Collect and analyze different definitions.
- Action 2: Communicate differences and similarities of “homeless” definitions to appropriate staff through cross-training.

Strategy 2: Analyze Housing Data (Current and Ongoing).

- Action 1: Collect and analyze data at the statewide level.

Strategy 3: Update Inventory of Homeless-Specific Programs and Facilities.

- Action 1: Identify existing directories and resources.

Strategy 4: Inventory Current Funding and Resources Specifically for Homeless Children and Families.

- Action 1: Identify major public and private sources of homeless-specific funding statewide.

Strategy 5: Cost-Benefit Analysis.

- Action 1: Review literature and explore possibilities for Tennessee-specific research.

Strategy 6: Establish a Sub-Committee Including: Continuum of Care Application Coordinators, Consolidated Plan Needs Assessment Preparers, and Representatives of Relevant State Agencies.

Strategy 7: Establish Public Information-Sharing System for Access to Homeless Family Data.

- Action 1: Research existing state capabilities and privacy/confidentiality restrictions.

Strategy 8: Pursue Research Evaluation Funds to Conduct Evaluation of Initiative Progress.

- Action 1: Work through State Task Force to implement strategy.

Strategy 9: Involve Consumers at All Levels.

Priority 4: Improve Access to Mainstream Services.

Strategy 1: Define “Mainstream” Services.

Strategy 2: Identify Gaps and Barriers.

- Action 1: Identify and assemble primary stakeholders (i.e., consumers and community-based shelter/service staff) to gather firsthand perspective of gaps and barriers.
- Action 2: Inventory mainstream services.

Strategy 3: Commit the State's Leadership to Adopt Policies that Improve Access to Own and Other Services.

Strategy 4: Implement Cross-Training of Policy/Procedures Modifications.

Strategy 5: Educate Consumers and Community-Based Homeless Program Staff Regarding Mainstream Services (and Specific Access Strategies) for Homeless Families with Children.

Strategy 6: Develop Effective "Case Management" Services at the Local Level.

Priority 5: Expand Inventory of Safe, Affordable, Quality Housing.

Strategy 1: Create Affordable, Housing Projects for Families with Supportive Services.

- Action 1: Expand Creating Homes Initiative model to other agencies and localities.
- Action 2: Explore funding opportunities, e.g., bond issue, Low-Income Housing Tax Credits (LIHTC); public/private, federal grants; faith-based organizations; foundation/community support to stimulate capacity building.
- Action 3: Access unexpected block grant funds when possible.

Strategy 2: Inventory Current Family Housing Units and Conduct Needs Assessment.

- Action 1: Compile existing data from Continuum of Care applications.

Strategy 3: Encourage Public Housing Authorities (PHA's), Tennessee Housing Development Agencies (THDA), and Public Information Officers (PIO's) to Adopt Priorities of State Task Force Initiative to Reduce Homelessness for Children and Families.

- Action 1: Adopt/establish preferences for homeless families.
- Action 2: Allow additional points as incentives for proposals that promote development of housing for homeless families.
- Action 3: Ensure educational needs of children from homeless families are met.

In closing, Tennessee's strategy to end homelessness must respond to the unique needs of our State's population, geography and resources. It is our hope that this report will result in new collaborations to reduce homelessness for all Tennesseans.

***TENNESSEANS...
Working Together to End Homelessness
And to Ensure the Health,
Education, and Well-Being of
Children and Families***

Vision Statement – Tennessee Policy Academy

Tennesseans...Working together to end homelessness and to ensure the health, education, and well-being of children and families.

Team Composition:

Team Co-Captains

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Team Members

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